

REMARKS

The present application was filed on February 11, 2004 with claims 1-37. Claims 2 and 18 have been previously canceled. Claims 1, 3-17 and 19-37 remain pending. Claims 1 and 27-30 are the pending independent claims.

Claims 1-37 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over an article by B. Medjahed et al. entitled, "Business-to-Business Interactions: Issues and Enabling Technologies," (hereinafter "Medjahed") in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0212778 (hereinafter "Collomb").

Applicants have amended independent claims 1 and 27-30 in this application. Applicants are not conceding in this application that those claims are not patentable over the art cited by the Examiner, as the present claim amendments are only for facilitating expeditious prosecution. Applicants respectfully reserve the right to pursue these and other claims in one or more continuations and/or divisional patent applications.

Specifically, independent claims 1 and 27-30 have been amended to include limitations wherein the data attribute specification, the algorithm specification and the relationship specification are maintained in each of a plurality of hierarchical levels of a storage framework and wherein the hierarchical levels are specified based on the given domain with which the data being managed is associated such that one level of the storage framework is a refinement of another level of the storage framework. These claims have also been amended to include a further limitation wherein the plurality of hierarchical levels comprises: a service level agreement management domain specification comprising template representations of a plurality of service offerings; at least one service offering specification, each service offering specification comprising a template representation of a given one of the plurality of service offerings; and at least one contract instance specification, each contract instance specification comprising a template representation of a given service level agreement.

Support for these amendments may be found in the specification at page 14, line 3, to page 15, line 6, with reference to FIG. 5.

With regard to the §103 rejection, Applicants respectfully submit that the claims as amended are not obvious in light of the cited references in that the combined teachings of Medjahed and Collomb fail to teach or suggest the limitations of the independent claims as amended. As such, Applicants assert that claims 1 and 27-30, as amended, are patentable over Medjahed and Collomb.

Dependent claims 3-17, 19-26 and 31-37 are patentable by virtue of their dependency from respective independent claims 1 and 30 and also recite patentable subject matter in their own right.

In view of the above, Applicants believe that claims 1, 3-17 and 19-37 are in condition for allowance, and respectfully request withdrawal of the §103(a) rejection.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William E. Lewis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "William" being more prominent and the last name "Lewis" following in a similar style.

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